

APPENDICES

Appendix One

Written Responses by Fiji Higher Education Commission



PRESENTATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

TUESDAY-15th October 2019

Building together an educated and globally competitive Fiji



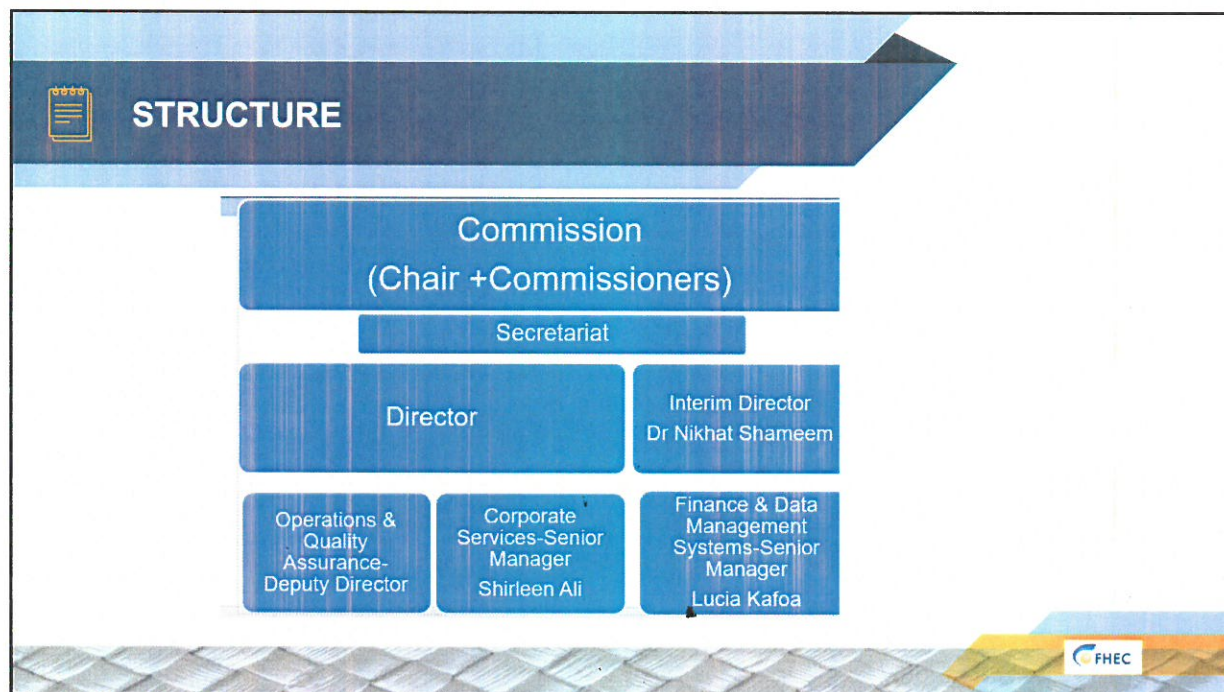
FHEC VISION AND MISSION



VISION – Building together an educated and globally competitive Fiji

MISSION – To quality assure the delivery of higher education that meets the needs of our stakeholders





Finance & Data Management Systems Team



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Corporate Services Team



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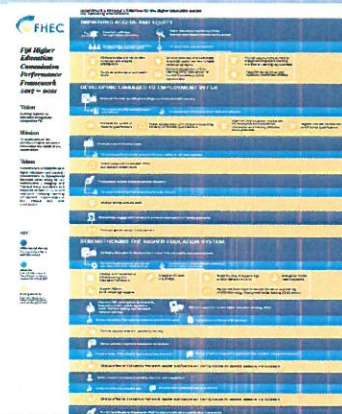


FHEC STRATEGIC PLAN

- Development and implementation started in 2017.
- The FHEIP Programme is woven into the FHEC operations.
- The FHEC strategic plan is aligned to the SDGs, National Development Plan, and the MEHA Strategic Plan.



STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

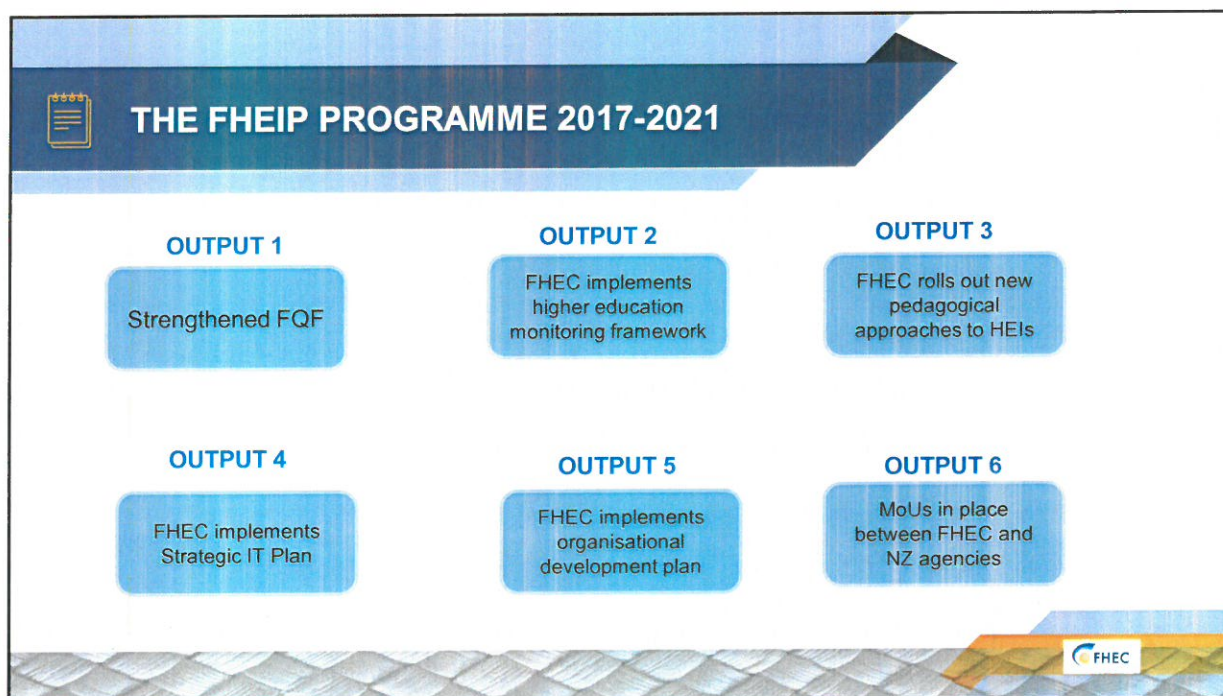


Improving access and equity

Developing linkages to employment in Fiji

Strengthening the higher education system

Building the capacity of the FHEC to support the delivery of its strategy





Fiji Higher Education Commission

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'Building together an educated and globally competitive Fiji'

Brief Overview of the Report

The Annual Report covers the period January-July 2016. The report provides progress on the FHEC's activities in the priority areas and financial performance towards supporting these activities. The priority areas from August to December 2016 were:

1. Delivering on the Government's strategic priorities for Higher Education (HE);
2. Providing a platform for excellence; and
3. Building our capacity.

The following are major highlights for this reporting period:

- Seven programmes were accredited on the Fiji Qualifications framework;
- Three Higher Education Institutions (HEI) were granted full registration;
- One HEI was granted recognition status;
- A new Chairperson was appointed;
- New Commission members were appointed;
- The Higher Education Amendment Bill was presented and discussed in a workshop for members of Parliament;
- New partnerships formed with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) to progress FEMIS for the higher education sector;
- Two Pacific regional qualifications were endorsed;
- The FHEC facilitated the development of the national policy on the National Open Educational Resources;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand funding, approved to the value of \$7million;
- The FHEC successfully hosted two international conferences; (1) International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE); and (2) Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN);
- The FHEC won the APQN *Cooperation in Quality Assurance Award*;
- The FHEC hosted discussions on financing and funding of higher education institutions in Fiji with the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF); and
- Government grants of \$70,584,776 disbursed to HEIs.

Questions

1. Brief the committee on the functions of the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

As per the Higher Education Act 2008 section 7, the functions of the FHEC are to:

- a. To register and regulate higher education institutions according to provisions of the Act;
- b. To foster and safeguard the national interest, the interest of students and parents and also of local higher education providers;
- c. To establish national standards for different qualifications;
- d. To oversee the review process of higher education institutions;
- e. To provide assurances that programmes developed by institutions meet national standards;
- f. Promote the development of Fiji as a knowledge society;
- g. To allocate government funds marked for higher education annually for higher education institutions according to transparent and well-publicised criteria for allocation;
- h. To foster cooperation among higher education institutions and linkages between higher education institutions and industry;
- i. To maintain a database of higher education information;
- j. To develop or cause to be developed an academic broadband facility for use by higher education institutions;
- k. To make recommendations to the Minister with respect to issues consistent with its functions including special projects.

2. Inform the committee of the key challenges FHEC faces whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives and how it is planning to overcome these challenges.

The challenges related to four priority areas;

- Improving Access and Equity;
(i) Lack of data around compliance to access and equity requirements as per SDGs;
- Developing linkages to employment in Fiji;
(i) Lack of data on the final destination of graduates;
- Strengthening the higher education system;
(i) Acceptance of national qualifications by universities;
(ii) Lack of awareness by the HEIs of the FHEC's roles and responsibilities;
- Building the capacity of the FHEC to support the delivery of its strategy;
(i) Lack of an organisational development and information technology plan.

The FHEC has, since 2017, developed and implemented a strategic plan for the 2017-2021 period (discussion in question 6).

The limited funding by way of the government operational grant posed some challenges for the FHEC in the achievement of some strategic objectives. However, through donor funding from the New Zealand Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) for the Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme (FHEIP) and the European Union Pacific Technical Vocational Education and Training (EU PacTVET) Project, the FHEC was able to commence work aimed at improving and initiating a strategic shift in Fiji's higher education sector.

3. How does FHEC ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?

The FHEC is an equal opportunity employer and encourages diversity in the workplace. Recruitment is based on merit; successful candidates for vacant positions are selected, based on their ability to perform in a role, assessed against objective selection criteria which does not discriminate against or give preference to any group or individual.

For example, over the last two vacancies advertised, the FHEC has the following data:

Vacancy: Secretary/Receptionist

Total number of applications: 162

Total number of applications identified as female: 139

Total number of applications identified as male: 23

Vacancy: Human Resources Administrator

Total number of applications: 134

Total number of applications identified as female: 102

Total number of applications identified as male: 32

Over the next year, the FHEC will be developing a gender policy aligned to the national gender policy and providing professional development around gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) to ensure that the principles in GESI are adopted in the workplace and in programming.

Current staffing numbers

Total number of full-time staff: 37

Total number of females: 24

Total number of males: 13

4. Out of the 37 employees employed by the Commission in the January – July 2016 period, what percentage of women were in managerial positions?

3 out of 5 managerial positions (60%) were women during that period.

- Director - Salote Rabuka
- Team Leader Executive Office – Charmaine Kwan
- Team Leader Professional Services – Amelia Siga
- Team Leader Finance and Research - Robert Misau
- Team Leader Quality Assurance - Eci Naisele
- Team Leader Corporate Services - Robert Misau

Total number of full-time staff in January-July 2016: 34

Total number of females: 19

Total number of males: 15

Total number of managerial positions in the current period- 3 (100%), with one position vacant (Director)

5. Does FHEC align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this?

Yes, the FHEC's work is aligned to the achievement of the SDGs and the targets attached to each goal; such as:

SDG 4: Quality Education

Goal 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

- At the core of the FHEC's work is ensuring that HEIs in Fiji deliver quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, through its process of institutional Recognition/Registration and Programmes Accreditation which ensure certain minimum standards are met to offer learners the best possible education.

Goal 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

- The FHEC's role in setting standards through the development of National Qualifications (NQs) in consultation with Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs) ensures that programme is "fit for purpose" in producing graduates with the relevant skills and knowledge in specific Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) areas.
- The NQs also embed entrepreneurial skills so learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge to not only seek employment but also possibly create employment through the establishment of small-medium businesses upon graduating.

Goal 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations;

- One of the priority areas under its current strategy for the FHEC is on Access and Equity. Under this priority, for the financial year 2019-2020, the FHEC is researching access and equity, which will examine the challenges for learners in accessing higher education opportunities in Fiji. In identifying the challenges, it will also allow the FHEC to facilitate or facilitate pathways for greater and equitable access to HE.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Broadly gender equality in relation to Access and Equity in higher education is catered for under one of the FHEC's priority areas.

Priority 1: Improving access and equity. The FHEC is committed to:

- Providing seamless pathways from secondary education into higher education and employment

- Developing access and equity data collection and analysis mechanisms
- Working with Higher Education Institutions and the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) to develop internal data collection capacity.
- Implementing the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) Higher Education module.

Priority 3: Strengthening the Higher Education System

- The continuous improvements in the higher education sector as supported by the FHEC ensures that access and equity in the area of gender equality remains an area which HEIs would be assessed against.

SDG 13: Climate Change mitigation

Goal 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

- Through the EU PacTVET Project, the FHEC facilitated the development of eight regional qualifications at Certificates Levels 1-4 in Resilience (Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction) and Sustainable Energy.
- The development was done in close consultation with regional Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs), with a diverse membership from 15 countries consisting of members from government, industry, academia, NGOs/CSOs, community practitioners, professional and licensing bodies.
- The EU PacTVET Project was jointly implemented by the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Pacific Community (SPC). The FHEC was engaged to facilitate the development of these regional qualifications owing to its matured systems and processes in the area of developing qualifications and standards in the region.
- The development of qualifications at Certificate Levels 1-4 was touted as a global first in TVET and aimed primarily at enhancing the capacity of community-level practitioners and thus linked directly to Goal 13.3 of the SDGs.

NB: One of the ways the FHEC is ensuring that we are meeting the SDGs is by partnering with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Board and to the extent it also supports this initiative, the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority to ensure that scholarships being allocated are disbursed according to national priority areas. The use of scholarships to ensure that national priorities are being met with principles of access and equity speaks to SDG Target 4B: Expand higher education scholarships for developing countries.

6. Update the committee on FHEC's future plans and initiatives.

The FHEC has a four-year strategic plan, which is aligned to the National Development Plan and Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Strategic Plan. The FHEC Strategic Plan from 2017-2021 contains four priority areas that the FHEC is focussed on:

1. Improving Access and Equity;
2. Developing linkages to employment in Fiji;
3. Strengthening the higher education system; and
4. Building the capacity of the FHEC to support the delivery of the Higher Education Strategy.

Under these four priority areas, the FHEC has planned the following major initiatives for the 2019-2020 financial year:

- Increasing the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to integrate data into the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS);
- Conducting research to explore issues of access and equity in higher education in Fiji;
- Establishing standards for HEIs to meet industry needs;
- Enhancing HEIs capacity to improve access, equity and support learner needs;
- Conducting the Fiji Graduate Outcome Survey;
- Supporting the establishment of a Skills Council in Fiji;
- Continuing to implement the FHEC's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy;
- Coordinating the review of the legislation;
- Collecting, analysing and providing HEI data to stakeholders;
- Reviewing the higher education funding model;
- Implementing the higher education funding model for the 10 funded HEIs;
- Strengthening compliance;
- Implementing a staff capacity building plan;
- Continuing to drive the implementation of the Dynamics 365 software to meet business processes; and
- Reviewing the FHEC's policy and procedures.

7. Registration of HEIs:

- a. Provide a list of all institutions that have been registered with the Commission according to the provisions of the Higher Education Act, by year until 2019.

As of 31 July 2019, 39 higher education institutions have been fully registered with the Commission.

No.	Name of HEI	Date of First Registration	Date of Re-registration	Registration No.
1	Vishan Infotech	03/10/2013	<i>In-progress</i>	RGN 0002/11
2	Pacific Theological College	23/08/2013	29/08/2019	RGN 0033/12
3	South Pacific Bible College	23/08/2013	29/08/2019	RGN 0016/11
4	Davuilevu Theological College	10/07/2014	<i>In-progress</i>	RGN 0032/12
5	Marist Champagnat Institute	08/12/2015	08/12/2020	RGN 0041/12
6	Ministry of Youth and Sports	08/12/2015	08/12/2020	RGN 0028/11
7	Caregivers Training Institute	04/02/2016	04/02/2021	RGN 0040/12
8	Corpus Christi Teachers' College	10/05/2016	10/05/2021	RGN 0003/11

9	Fiji National University	06/12/2016	06/12/2023	RGN 0015/10
10	Pacific Regional Seminary	20/03/2011	15/12/2016	RGN 0001/10
11	The University of Fiji	10/05/2016	10/05/2023	RGN 0020/11
12	Advance Aviation Training (Fiji) Limited	02/02/2017	02/02/2022	RGN 0042/10
13	Chevalier Training Institute	02/02/2017	02/02/2022	RGN 0042/12
14	College of Theology and Evangelism Fiji	01/08/2011	14/12/2017	RGN 0003/10
15	Montfort Boys' Town	20/03/2011	22/06/2017	RGN 0005/10
16	Pacific Eye Institute	01/08/2011	22/05/2017	RGN 0006/11
17	St. John the Baptist Theological College	26/10/2017	26/10/2017	RGN 0036/12
18	Asia Pacific College	31/05/2018	31/05/2023	RGN 0037/12
19	Darul Uloom and Darul Yataam of the South Pacific	18/12/2018	18/12/2023	RGN 0065/18
20	Fiji Corrections Service Training Academy	03/05/2018	03/05/2023	RGN 0057/15
21	Fiji LDS Church College	01/10/2018	01/10/2023	RGN 0062/18
22	Methodist Deaconess Training Centre	31/05/2018	31/05/2023	RGN 0054/14
23	Forestry Training Centre	07/12/2018	07/12/2023	RGN 0055/14
24	Fulton Adventist University College	12/11/2012	21/11/2018	RGN 0004/11
25	Pacific Flying School	11/04/2012	03/05/2018	RGN 0006/10
26	Sangam Institute of Technology	30/11/2012	21/11/2018	RGN 0004/10
27	ServicePro International Tourism & Hospitality Institute	12/11/2012	21/11/2018	RGN 0007/11
28	SPA Academy Fiji	01/08/2011	31/05/2018	RGN 0007/10
29	South Pacific Aviation Training Institute	29/11/2018	29/11/2023	RGN 0063/18
30	Pivot Point Fiji Institute	17/01/2012	31/05/2018	RGN 0019/10

31	Technical College of Fiji	10/12/2018	10/12/2023	RGN 0064/18
32	The University of the South Pacific	23/04/2013	03/05/2020	RGN 0016/10
33	Fiji Airports Aviation Academy	30/05/2013	23/07/2019	RGN 0029/11
34	Apostolic College of Theological Studies	30/05/2013	23/07/2019	RGN 0014/11
35	Australia Pacific Training Coalition	31/01/2013	14/05/2019	RGN 0008/10
36	Bible Institute at Raiwaqa	15/01/2019	15/01/2024	RGN 0066/19
37	Keshals Business Education Institute	30/05/2013	24/01/2019	RGN 0001/11
38	Tutu Rural Training Centre	29/01/2019	29/01/2024	RGN 0067/19
39	Vivekananda Technical Centre	11/07/2013	14/05/2019	RGN 0046/13

b. What are the challenges that the Commission faces in registering HEIs?

- HEIs applying for Recognition/Registration take time to submit the required documents to process their applications fully;
- In addition, part of the approval process is the assessment of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) Programme Documents (PDs) to be aligned to the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF). Some HEIs were slow in developing their programme documents. To minimise further delays, the FHEC supported these HEIs to produce improved PDs aligned to the FQF through support visits and capacity building workshops.

c. What are the requirements that need to be met by HEIs to obtain full or provisional registration with the Commission as well as to subsequently have their registration renewed?

The process of registration of higher education institutions involves assessing the capability of a higher education institution to deliver training for the higher education sector with supporting policies, staffing and resources. The given five quality criteria below are used for evaluating an application for registration: The indices used to make an assessment of an institution's suitability for registration is based on 53 detail indices (from the 5 quality criteria), depending on the type of institution that is being evaluated. These indices fall into 5 broad criteria which have been categorised as follows:

- Criteria for Governance (organisational and academic) and Sustainability;
- Criteria for Welfare of Staff and Students;
- Criteria for Infrastructure;
- Criteria for Teaching and Learning; and
- Criteria for Research (for Universities and University College applications).

How often are HEIs required to renew their registration?

The Higher Education Regulation 2009, Part 5, Clause 36, states:

- a) A University or degree awarding institute of technology shall be reviewed every 7 years;
- b) An Other Higher Education Institution shall be reviewed every 5 years; and
- c) A newly established Other Higher Education Institution shall be reviewed 3 years after its registration and every 5 years thereafter.

d. What is the Commission's plan to expedite the number of registered institutions to be recognised under it? How is it working together with HEIs that are not registered with it to enable them to obtain registration?

The FHEC is working closely with HEIs to either transition them from their recognition status to registration or to support them to meet the requirements to become fully registered. This is being done through follow-up visits, site inspections and workshops which ensure that the HEIs meet the minimum requirements in terms of documents, policies and other supporting evidence to prove their ability to deliver quality education to learners. Some of the challenges the FHEC faces in expediting the process of transitioning HEIs from recognition to registration include:

- Poor documentation of systems, processes and policies. The FHEC, where appropriate, has provided HEIs lacking in this area, support to develop policies and enhance existing systems and processes;
- Absence of audited financials, has in the case of some HEIs, delayed their progression to registration. In most instances, particularly for smaller, private HEIs, the lack of resources to prepare for an audit and engage the services of an external auditor has been a challenge; and
- Institutions have also been delayed in meeting registration status due to certain deficiencies in their teaching and learning facilities (class/lecture rooms). Where appropriate adjustments have been made to ensure a more conducive teaching and learning environment.

e. Are there any incentives offered to encourage institutions to register and likewise any penalties imposed on those that fail or delay to register?

The working relationship which the FHEC has with the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) and the TSLB, has seen a tightening of processes whereby only registered HEIs are eligible to access funding for private or sponsored (scholarships or loans) students.

For HEIs that fail to meet recognition status or transition to becoming fully registered, the FHEC has the authority to get the institution closed. The FHEC also works with the Department of Immigration so that visas for foreign teachers/trainers and students are not granted if the HEI is not registered.

8. Is there a database maintained to capture all Higher Education (HE) information as required under the Act?

Yes, the FHEC captures information on its database. The information ranges from institution details to programme and course details. The FHEC is currently progressing the work on its database through funding from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

9. Please explain on the establishment of the National Standards for different qualifications. Has it been completed yet? If not, what's the progress?

The Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) has been established since 2012 and was reviewed and updated in 2018. This framework describes 10 level descriptors (which describe levels learning complexity) and includes 10 qualification type descriptors. The qualification type descriptors outline the purpose of each qualification type and the entry requirements, credit value and relationship to other qualifications.

National standards are developed as building blocks for national qualifications which are accredited and registered on the FQF. Each qualification is developed by the Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs). First national qualifications (at Certificates Level 1, 2, 3 and 4) were developed in response to the needs of trade-related skills in Fiji: construction, automobile, tourism, electrical, electronics, agriculture. Fifty-six national qualifications were completed and trialled at selected institutions – Vivekananda Technical Centre (VTV), Technical College of Fiji (TCF) and Monfort Boys Town (MBT) as of 2016. This process is an on-going activity, and to date, 122 national qualifications have been completed at levels 1 and 2, and most are currently being delivered at approved delivery centres - MBT, Technical College of Fiji and Fiji Latter-Day Saints (LDS) Church College.

The Standards and Guidelines for Fiji Higher Education Institutions document outline the 20 standard criteria that must be met for a qualification to be recognised against the FQF.

10. USP has been in the news lately highlighting mismanagement, what is the Commission's view on this especially in regard to the big amount of funds allocated to this institution?

The FHEC is unable to comment on the issue of mismanagement until an official report is received.

11. What kind of information FHEC has to offer in regard to students that have graduated and are in employment?

The FHEC is carrying out a Graduate Outcomes Survey which will provide baseline information to determine the growth and performance of graduates at the workplace. Once the results are finalised with trends identified, the FHEC will be better informed on how best to advise various stakeholders, including students who have graduated.

How has FHEC maintained/improved its relationship with Higher Education Institutions and Industry?

Subsequent to these observations from 2016, the FHEC has addressed this issue. The FHEC values all its stakeholders and makes concerted efforts to engage with the higher education institutions and industry regularly. The following are some of the activities conducted as part of this valuable engagement:

- Institutional visits and meetings with senior management with a brief on the functions of the FHEC particularly in funding, investment plans, teaching and learning, staffing capabilities and a requirement under the FQF;
- Conducting professional development opportunities for the teaching and administration staff in the areas of programme accreditation, recognition of foreign qualifications, funding, and quality assurance processes; and

- Engaging with the Industry Sector Advisory Committees (ISACs) for the different sector industry in the trade skills areas- construction, automobile, electrical/electronics, mechanical, tourism, and agriculture.

12. What recommendations has FHEC made to the Minister on issues consistent with its functions including special projects and how have these been taken into consideration?

- Appointment of a full-time position of the Executive Chairman of the FHEC, between 2014-2016.
- Review of the Higher Education Act 2008.
- Approval of extension for provisional accreditation of programmes for HEIs that have been granted full registration status. This is inclusive and in addition to the mandated 12 months provisional accreditation provision in the HE regulation 2009.
- The FHEC also makes recommendations to the Hon. Minister on the government grant allocations for 10 HEIs based on various weightings/measures which are calculated under the Higher Education Funding Model.
- Support for the ratification of the Tokyo Convention has been approved by Cabinet.

13. The committee notes that the FHEC is a member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). What requirements of these quality assurance agencies does the Commission need to meet in order to deliver as a regulating body?

The Asia Pacific Quality Register Council (APQRC) is the regulating body for the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAAHE). Both agencies are international quality assurance bodies that quality check on systems and processes on higher education regulating agencies, internationally and in the Asia Pacific region. The FHEC complies with these.

Acceptance onto the Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR) is based on an external quality assurance (EQA) agency being found to be 'substantially compliant' against eleven APQR criteria, incorporating the *Chiba Principles* as well as (INQAAHE) '*Guidelines of Good Practice*'.

The evaluation criteria is as follows:

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- *Criterion 1: Organization*
 - The QAA is a full member of APQN or is a QA body which is a valid entity recognised by the appropriate authority in the relevant country/territory/region and is accountable to stakeholders.
- *Criterion 2: Operations*
 - The quality assurance agency undertakes quality assurance activities (at institutional and/or programme level) on a cyclical basis.
- *Criterion 3: Mission and Objectives*
 - The mission statement and objectives of the agency are understood consistently by its stakeholders.
- *Criterion 4: Staff and reviewers*

- The profile of the agency staff and the profile of the reviewers the agency uses are consistent with the Mission Statement.
- *Criterion 5: Independence*
 - The quality assurance agency is independent and has autonomous responsibility for its QA operations. The judgments and recommendations of the agency's reports cannot be changed by third parties.
- *Criterion 6: Resources*
 - The agency has sufficient resources to run its operations in accordance with its mission statement and objectives.
- *Criterion 7: Process and Criteria*
 - The description of the processes and criteria applied by the agency are transparent and publicly available and includes: self-evaluation, site visit, public report and follow-up measure. The published standards and criteria are applied consistently and rigorously.
- *Criterion 8: Appeals*
 - An appeals mechanism is available for the institutions
- *Criterion 9: Quality Assurance*
 - The agency has effective quality assurance measures in place to monitor itself and is subject to occasional review.
- *Criterion 10: Monitoring and Evaluation*
 - The agency undertakes research on internal and external quality assurance and provides information and advice to the higher education institutions.
- *Criterion 11: Agency Linkages*
 - The agency cooperates and collaborates with other agencies and key players across national borders.

14. Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS):

- a. **What has been the outcome of the Commission's collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts in tracking the rate at which learners progress from secondary school to HE?**

Some of the outcomes since the project was initiated in 2016 were:

- Enhanced collaboration with the MEHA on improvements to FEMIS to better cater for the non-university HEIs which would use the system as their Student Management System (SMS), i.e. improvement of the system (2017);
- Development of standardised reporting fields under the FEMIS Higher Education Institution Data Collaboration Agreement;
- Trial uploading of student data with FNU and USP on to FEMIS (2018);
- The signing of the FEMIS HEI data Collaboration Agreement between MEHA, FHEC and the USP and FNU, essentially agreeing to the process of data exchanges and trialling of the system (signed May 2018);
- Piloting of FEMIS at the ServicePro International Tourism and Hospitality Institute (ServicePro) and increased advocacy with HEIs on the use of FEMIS as an SMS to better manage student data/records (February 2018);
- Pilot and onboarding of FEMIS with the Vivekananda Technical Centre (VTC) in July 2019; and

- Improved collaboration and an enhanced relationship with HEIs on the integration of HE data on to FEMIS.

b. What has been the progress on the creation of a central repository for the HE sector to capture selected HE data in FEMIS? What type of HE data is captured therein?

Progress on the creation of this central data repository for the higher education sector via FEMIS has been slow, but the FHEC has consulted and collaborated heavily with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts. The major challenge is the initial resistance by the universities to exchange and integrate onto FEMIS. The FHEC is overcoming these challenges by:

- Working closely with HEIs to build capacity on the use of FEMIS as supported by the MEHA FEMIS team; and
- Continuously engaging with HEIs to ensure that the momentum of progress does not come to a halt.

The integration of HE data on to FEMIS will add on to existing data on students from ECE through to high schools and the Technical Colleges of Fiji (TCF) and will include the following:

- *Student Information*
 - *Unique student identifiers* – Names (full name), date of birth, gender, Birth Registration Number (BRN), TIN Number, FEMIS Student ID number (index number), Institutional Student ID number, Passport number, Language spoken and Ethnicity (which is linked to access and equity research), local or international student.
 - *Student HEI information* - Year of enrolment, Year of completion, programme enrolled in, HEI enrolled at, grades, funding type (Private or sponsor [both scholarship and loan]), country of citizenship (to also track international students), mode of programme delivery.
- *Institutional Information*
 - FEMIS Institutional code, HEI programme code, programme name, programme requisites, programme description, qualification type.
 - Basic HEI information.
- Next phases of data collection will include
 - Disability information - linked to access and equity research.
 - Workforce data - linked to data held with the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Fiji National Provident Fund and Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Board to better evaluate the outcomes and return of investment into higher education for the government.
 - Per cent of programme online – linked to access and equity and modality of delivery of programmes.
 - Further refinements to the current data sets to ensure information is accurately collated for various reporting levels, i.e. higher education sector, wider education sector, national, regional and international level reporting.

c. How is this data assisting the Commission in improving the quality of the education sector in Fiji?

This will be determined once FEMIS is fully integrated by HEIs.

15. Provide details on the criteria FHEC uses to allocate government funds to HEIs.

Between 2016-2017, in allocating Government funds to HEIs, the FHEC used a model, commonly referred to as the *funding model*, which has been approved by the cabinet. The model is formula-based and uses two funding components to determine HEI funding:

- enrolments funding component; and
- leverage funding component.

The enrolments funding components uses variables such as programme costs and tuition fee revenue to the level of Government subsidy required. A level playing field factor, which is a percentage weighting that is based on the type of institution, is then applied. For instance, state-owned institutions would be subsidised at a higher rate than private HEIs due to Government's obligation in supporting the sustainability of the HEI.

The leverage funding component allocated funding to all HEIs based on three factors: the uniqueness of the HEI, HEIs quality (in terms of facilities, staff, QA systems, etc.) and the HEIs access (geographically and in terms of students from low socio-economic groups and impaired members of society).

The FHEC is currently working towards cabinet approval for a revised funding model for implementation in 2020-2021. The revised funding model proposes two funding models to cater for the diversity of HEIs in the system. One funding model for universities and one funding model for non-universities.

This is because the universities are larger, more sophisticated, research-active institutions, whereas the non-universities are smaller, have a relatively narrow focus and often, lack sophisticated corporate systems and corporate capability. Therefore, each model is designed to take account of the differences in the scale and focus of the two groups of HEIs.

The university and the non-university funding model will each consist of five funding components. The following four components are common in each model:

1. teaching and learning: this component will recognise the costs of delivering education and the number of students;
2. equity: this component is to incentivise enrolment in and completion of qualifications by people from disadvantaged groups, particularly, students with disabilities and students from low-income families;
3. performance: this component is to incentivise HEIs to support their students towards completion of their studies; and
4. national priority: this component is to recognise the Government's role in driving national priorities as outlined in the national development plan in HEIs.

The fifth funding component will distinguish the two funding models. The fifth component in the University funding model is a research component to incentivise Universities to conduct research aligned to Fiji's national needs. And the fifth component in the non-university model will be an institutional base grant component, reflecting the fact that these HEIs are small and therefore, unable to achieve economies of scale.

16. Elaborate on the National Policy on Open Educational Resources and how schools have benefitted from it.

The term OER describes publicly accessible materials and resources for any user to use, re-mix, improve and redistribute under some licenses. The development and promotion of open educational resources are often motivated by a desire to provide an alternate or enhanced educational shifts.

The OER policy was launched by the Minister for Education in March 2016. This mooted a series of OER activities including workshops and engaging with key stakeholders including the universities, to adopt and adapt the OER.

Ownership of the OER lies with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts.

17. Briefly explain the roles of the following FHEC committees:

- **Recognition Committee**
- **Registration Committee**
- **Industry Standards Advisory Committees**

Recognition Committee: As per the Higher Education Regulations 2009, Part 3, Clause 11, the Recognition Committee has been established to assess applications from higher education institutions for recognition status. The Committee makes recommendations accordingly to the Commission.

Registration Committee: As per the Higher Education Act 2008, section 8, the Registration Committee has been established to assess applications from high education institutions for registration status. The Committee makes recommendations accordingly to the Commission.

Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs) are responsible for:

- the research and development of proposed National Qualifications;
- undertaking consultation with relevant industry, regulator, licensing body, or community to confirm the need for the qualification and ensure that the proposed qualification meets this need;
- providing advice and guidance;
- endorsing the final draft of the proposed National Qualifications;
- ensuring that the accreditation submission meets the requirements of the FQF and the Quality Standards for Accreditation of FQF Qualifications 1–10 (2-1a Guidelines).

18. Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme 2016 - 2021:

- a. What progress has been made on the implementation of the above programme and in making improvements to the five focus areas outlined on Page 22 of the Annual Report?**

Implementation of the FHEIP started in January 2017 with the recruitment of a new Director and Programme Manager. The five focus areas referred to in the 2016 annual report refers to the short-term outcomes for the FHEIP programme. In regard to the five focus areas, the FHEC works towards six outputs under these five focus areas:

Output One: Strengthen Fiji Qualifications Framework

Under Output 1, the FHEC commissioned an external review of the Fiji Qualifications Framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose, conducted an internal review of options to reduce the proliferation of qualifications at all levels and identified ways to streamline their development. The external review focussed on reviewing the design, effectiveness and implementation of the framework, including the implications for foundation level (one and two) qualifications and providing advice to the FHEC about future changes. The FHEC also drew expertise from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for this activity.

The Review of the Fiji Qualifications Framework has been completed with 34 recommendations. The FHEC has approved the report with recommendations, and the FHEC is progressing the implementation of the recommendations under these major themes:

- A revised planning approach has helped FHEC for strategic planning which has contributed to the contribution of the FQF being a tool for the for a pan-sector capability and capacity development platform;
- The different ISACs have been supported and facilitated to undertake sector level functional analysis in the areas of tourism, construction, agriculture, security, wet trades;
- There has been an increasing number of HEIs that offer national qualifications with the new assessment method and procedures started;
- The Fiji Qualifications Council has been reactivated;
- Mutual recognition was sought from other countries especially ASEAN member countries for the adoption of the national qualifications;
- Initial works has started for the alignment of the national standards to the secondary school TVET curriculum under the Ministry of Education;
- There has been an improvement in the streamlining of the process of programme accreditation.
- 5 new provider programmes have been accredited on the FQF

The process for Recording (Accreditation) of provider qualifications was developed and approved by the Commission to cater to University degree programmes at level 7 on the FQF.

Output Two- FHEC rollout new pedagogical approaches to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Under Output 2, the FHEC started the development of a comprehensive monitoring framework in consultation with the HEI sector. This framework will encompass a range of indicators, including those defined as part of the FHEC Strategy, the FHEC's financial and other performance monitoring activities, and the requirements of quality assurance processes. Developing this monitoring framework will support the FHEC and the sector to move toward managing for outcomes and reduce the current demand for highly transactional and input-focused monitoring.

Additionally, the FHEC is providing relevant support for institutions to develop and improve provision of quality education and training. The elements of the national Quality Assurance strategy – External Evaluation, Review and Compliance – is being reviewed and recommendations will be made to strengthen accredited higher education institutions.

Output Three- FHEC rollout new pedagogical approaches to Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

Under Output 3, the FHEC developed a framework that describes the competencies that teaching staff must have including the relevant skills and knowledge required for the delivery of vocational education and training. This competency framework includes teaching and learning relating to vuli-tara (hands-on); and traditional/indigenous (tovo vakavanua kei na cakacaka ni liga) skills, culture and knowledge.

The FHEC is working with the HEI sector and community leaders to design a competency framework that will help to guide the planning of professional development activities. It is also important to build on work already supported such as the initiative through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to develop regional standards for teachers and principals. Developing a competency framework will help HEIs with strategic HR planning, enhance confidence among employers and the community in the higher education system in Fiji, and help to ensure that the system is more responsive to the needs of stakeholders.

The FHEC is also working with organisations in New Zealand with experience of working successfully with Maori learners to identify strategies and approaches that ensure teaching and learning caters appropriately to the needs of i-Taukei and specific minority communities in Fiji.

Output Four- FHEC Implement Strategic IT Plan

Under Output 4, the FHEC worked with a New Zealand-based partner with experience in strategic information technology project development to prepare a strategic information technology plan. The FHEC has a range of flexible online information technology modules that support the organisation's staff to deliver its functions. The current system has tended however to involve the refinement of existing legacy systems, so may not be optimally configured from a design perspective, and requires further enhancement to ensure it is aligned to the new 'managing for outcomes' approach.

The FHEC currently experiences considerable issues with the quality of data supplied by the HEI sector and the system does not collect the kind of data required for outcome-based monitoring. Aligning the current systems with the new monitoring framework ensures that the FHEC has access to the data it requires to discharge its statutory roles, will enable a transition to outcomes-based monitoring and improve resource allocation at both the FHEC and provider level.

A cost-efficient approach to the management information system is in developing an inter-face with the Ministry of Education's Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS). This powerful database has been tracking key indicators in real-time to across the basic education system. Information on the new technical colleges, including student attendance and results, will soon be included. Students are also tracked using a unique identifier (birth certificate number) which enables analysis at the individual level. Capitalising on this data will enable more robust tracer studies.

Output Five- FHEC implement Organisational Development Plan- Organisational development plan has been developed

Under Output 5, the FHEC has reviewed the current structure, policies and procedures; and learning and development needs. Based on the planning needs identified, the FHEC will identify the core skills and competencies that the organisation requires, understand those that are available to the FHEC already, and describe a process for staff to access any new skills required to address critical gaps.

Output Six- MOUs in place between FHEC, national and international agencies

Under Output 6, a priority for the FHEC is to build on relationships with key New Zealand agencies and institutions that have expressed an interest in supporting the development of the higher education sector in Fiji. These institutional linkages will assist with the long-term sustainability of relationships and interventions.

The FHEC has signed MOUs signed with five organisations

- Wintec
- Skills International
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)
- Ako Aotearoa and Te Wananga o Awanuiarangi
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) of Australia

b. Provide a breakdown of the grants administered to the Commission under this programme for each year from 2016 to 2019 and how they were utilised.

The grants are allocated according to the six output areas. This is in accordance with the grant funding agreement between the FHEC and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

FHEIP Project Summary

Particulars	Tranche 1	Tranche 2	Tranche 3	Total
Grant Received	\$2,008,857	\$1,297,465	\$2,053,194	\$5,359,516

Utilisation

MFAT Output	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Output 1 - Strengthened Fiji Qualifications Framework	-	\$16,014	\$537,547	\$685,160	\$1,238,720
Output 2 - FHEC implement Higher Education Monitoring Framework	-	\$54	\$120,912	\$71,786	\$192,752
Output 3 - FHEC coordinates rollout of new pedagogical approaches to Higher Education Institutes	-	\$1,165	\$571,952	\$73,880	\$646,996
Output 4 - FHEC supported to implement a Strategic IT Plan	-	\$7,906	\$145,777	\$167,529	\$321,212
Output 5 - FHEC implements Organisational Development Plan	-	\$61,157	\$345,062	\$260,988	\$667,207
Output 6 - MOUs in place between FHEC and NZ agencies and institutions	-	\$91,658	\$365,066	\$214,338	\$671,062
Output 7 - Administrative Assistance	-	\$100,000	\$70,000	\$50,000	\$220,000
Total	-	\$277,953	\$2,156,316	\$1,523,681	\$3,957,950

20. Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) team's three-day visit to Fiji:

- a. What was the outcome of the CTEF team's three-day visit to study Fiji's higher education model and its funding?**

The result of the three-day visit was a mutual agreement between the research team from CTEF, the collaborator (FHEC) and other stakeholders to work together and produce a policy paper that was tabled at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Fiji in February 2018.

- b. The committee notes from the Annual Report that a research team comprising of representatives from the CTEF and stakeholders from a few Pacific Island nations would be undertaking a study of the effectiveness of HE financing models. Has this study been undertaken and if so, what recommendations for reform have been proposed to the Governments in the Pacific?**

The FHEC maintains no documentation on this to be able to effectively respond to this question.

21. As outlined in the National Development Plan, was the Commission able to review apprenticeship programmes in tertiary and vocational institutions in the 2018-2019 Financial year?

A review was undertaken as part of a study by the Queensland University of Technology, and the eight recommendations are currently being acted upon. This includes the recommendations on the apprenticeship scheme and the establishment of a skills council.

Annexure 1 (see separate attachment)

FHEC Strategic Performance Framework 2017-2021



Fiji Higher Education Commission Performance Framework 2017 – 2021

Vision

Building together an educated and globally competitive Fiji

Mission

To quality assure the delivery of higher education that meets the needs of our stakeholders

Values

Commitment to **Excellence** in higher education and training | Commitment to **Exceptional Services** when aiding all our stakeholders | **Integrity** and **Transparency** Innovation and **Responsiveness** for continued relevance | **Lifelong Learning** for learners | Commitment to **Our People** and their contribution

KEY

FHEC Desired Results
The impact that FHEC is seeking to achieve

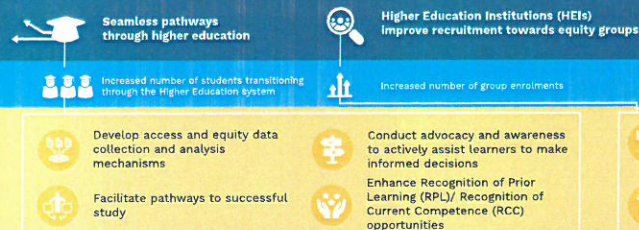
Measures
How will FHEC know it has achieved its desired result at the end of 2021

Priority Activities
How will FHEC know it has achieved its desired result at the end of 2021

Government & Minister's Priorities for the Higher Education Sector

Our operating environment

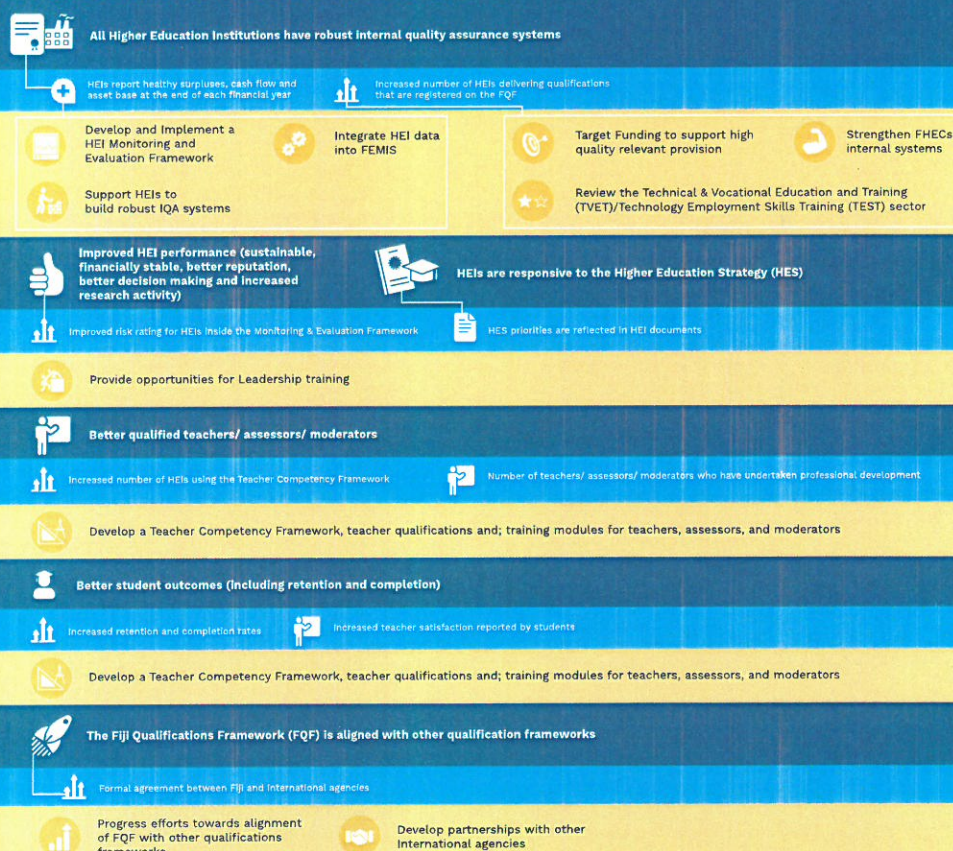
IMPROVING ACCESS AND EQUITY



DEVELOPING LINKAGES TO EMPLOYMENT IN FIJI



STRENGTHENING THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM



BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE FHEC TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE HES



Appendix Two

Verbatim Report

STANDING COMMITTEE ON

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

.....

[Verbatim Report of Meeting]

HELD IN THE

COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING)

ON

TUESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2019

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON TUESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2019, AT 1.55 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC)

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Mr. Julian Moti | : | Chairman, FHEC |
| 2. | Mr. Lepani Uluinaviti | : | Commissioner |
| 3. | Dr. Nikhat Shameem | : | Interim Director |
| 4. | Ms. Shirleen Ali | : | Senior Manager, Corporate Services |
| 5. | Ms. Lucia Kafoa | : | Senior Manager, Finance and Data Management Systems |

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Members. Good afternoon and welcome.

To the Team from the Fiji Higher Education Commission: On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I would like to welcome you, Sir, the Chairperson of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, Mr. Julian Moti, welcome, Sir; also Mr. Lepani Uluinaviti, welcome, Sir; also, Dr. Nikhat Shameem, Interim Director; also Ms. Shirleen Ali, Senior Manager, Corporate Services; and also, Ms. Lucia Kafoa, Senior Manager, Finance and Data Management Systems; welcome, Sirs and welcome, Madams.

For your information, I am the Chair of the Committee and the Honourable Members of the Committee are the Honourable Vagnathan, Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu, Honourable Simone Rasova, and Honourable Alipate Nagata who will be joining us soon.

Honourable Members, the Team from the Fiji Higher Education Commission is here to present to us in regards to the Annual Report for the Year 2016, and they have given us the presentation as well as their response to the questions.

I will request you, the Team from FHEC, to also refer to the Questions that we have sent to you with your response, after that the supplementary questions will follow from the Honourable Members.

Once again, welcome, and we now give you the opportunity to present your presentation.

MR. J. MOTI.- Thank you, Mr. Chair and Honourable Members of the Standing Committee. I also acknowledge those who are present here to support the work of this Standing Committee in various capacities.

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Julian Moti, Chair of FHEC. I appear before your Committee as the Commission has just recently appointed the Chair, and I thank the Honourable Members of this Committee for inviting the Commission to be present here to present this Report.

Let me introduce to you those who are seated here with me: to my right is Mr. Lepani Uluinaviti who is with me as a member of the Commission; to my left is the Interim Director, Dr. Nikhat Shameem; to her left is Ms. Shirleen Ali who is the Senior Manager, Corporate Services; and to my extreme right is Ms. Lucia Kafoa, who is the Senior Manager, Finance and Data Systems.

The Preface of our Presentation: We are stating firstly that the Annual Report to be considered by your esteemed Committee relates specifically to the Financial Year beginning January 1, 2016 to July 31st, 2016.

The short temporal scoping compass of this Report is the consequence of the change of the Government's Financial Year.

Also by stating, secondly, that the current membership of the Commission was brought about a few months ago. Let me also state and acknowledge that notwithstanding the recent commencement of our term and tenure, we are cognizant firmly of the two-year delay of the presentation of this Annual Report by our predecessors, but also conscious of the statutory and necessity for its timely completion and submission under section 49 of our present statute.

Finally, that the answers and explanations to the specific queries raised by our Honourable Committee have been furnished in written form yesterday, and to the extent that we are not able to respond adequately and visit your additional queries and concerns. The Commission will be pleased to delve into your concerns and institute records for reporting that will provide the answers and clarifications.

So that is my very brief introduction and I would like to now handover to Dr. Nikhat Shameem to complement this introduction by presentation.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Good afternoon, everybody.

HON. MEMBERS.- Good afternoon.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- It is indeed good to be here with you all and to be given the opportunity to discuss the Fiji Higher Education Commission's Annual Report. As the Chair, Mr. Julian Moti put it: we are all new to the positions.

I joined the Fiji Higher Education Commission as its Deputy Director in October last year. At that point in time, the Director was Ms. Linda Amua, she is aged, a New Zealander. In January of this year, she left FHEC to go back to New Zealand, that is when I took over as Interim Director. I have now been Interim Director for nine months. It has not been easy as you can imagine, it is a new position for me but I have very much enjoyed working particularly with the (Fiji) Higher Education Commission because my own background is in higher education and in management of large higher education institutions that are in progress, so thank you very much for having us here.

Likewise for Shirleen and Lucia, they are also new to the Fiji Higher Education Commission. They joined this year, so the three of us are currently the three managers of FHEC and we work very closely together with the Commission on this.

So our presentation today is summing up some of the questions that you put to us. We have been through all the questions and we tried to look at what might be the specific slides that we would present to you that would include the answers to majority of the questions. So we were very very focused with that because we have recognised that there were quite a few questions that you wanted to ask and our time is limited.

So what we have done is, we have put together a presentation that we believe will answer the bulk of your questions, to ask us any further questions and, of course, you do have a full written response in front of you, and I am sure that you have been through them, so if there is any question advancing out of that, we are happy to address them.

If we cannot address them, we will take a rain-check and we will come back to you with the answers, because we do not know everything but we do know substantially within those areas, so, please, work with us, if you do not get the answers to your queries, but we will try. Thank you very much.

We are going to start with the presentation on the Vision and Mission of the Fiji Higher Education Commission and you probably already know that the Fiji Higher Education Commission was established after our Higher Education Act was passed in 2008. There have been several amendments to that and generally, we function totally within the Act.

FHEC Vision: We have a Vision, and our Vision for FHEC is “Building together an educated and globally competitive Fiji”. This Vision goes through all the work that we do with the Fiji Higher Education Commission. We also have built very strong links with employment, so we work with the employment sector in ensuring that this Vision is realised throughout the training, as well as through the employment sectors.

FHEC Mission: What is our Mission? For us, our most important Mission is quality assurance that whatever it is we are doing, whatever it is we are delivering and whatever it is we are supporting our 69 Higher Education Institutions with, is done with quality. I think that is absolutely critical in the Fiji context that we are seeing a strong and competitive players educationally internationally.

So our Mission is to quality assure the delivery of higher education that meets the needs of our stakeholders and our stakeholders are many, notwithstanding the most important stakeholders, of course, are our students and then our parents and our communities, industry and everyone else who wants a good quality higher education.

The structure of the Fiji Higher Education is laid by the Commission and the Chairman of the Commission has spoken already. He is aided in his role by eight other Commissioners and they are standing at the helm of our Fiji Higher Education Commission.

We (Lucia, Shirleen and I) are part of the Secretariat, so we look after the Operations side of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, while the Commission deals with governance.

Currently, the Director position has been vacant for nine months. We have yet to appoint the Director. We have not heard from the Ministry as to who that Director would be or could be. I am the Interim Director and I have been the Interim Director since early February this year.

Operations and Quality Assurance: Deputy Director, that is my substantive position before I became the Interim Director, I therefore currently hold both positions.

Corporate Services: The Senior Manager is Shirleen Ali, who has a huge, long-standing background in Corporate Services. She has worked both nationally and internationally and she is a very strong player in the Commission.

Our Finance and Data Management System: The Senior Manager is Lucia Kafoa, she too comes up with vast experience and vast knowledge, both of the development sector, the employment sector and very importantly, the education sector.

The next slide, ladies and gentlemen, is on the team which is at the centre, at the core of our business - this is the Operations and Quality Assurance Team which I, as the substantive Deputy Director, lead. This is comprised of the HEI Registration and Review Committee. You will remember that one of your questions asked us for our function of FHEC, so we hope that this is answering some of your questions. So we do registration and review where we recognise and register our higher education institutions. We also complete a mandatory review of registered higher education institutions at the five-year mark and at the seven-year mark. We quality assure higher education institutions, we have a complaints resolution section where we receive complaints from the public, students, lecturers and teachers at these various institutions, so we respond to them accordingly.

We also monitor and evaluate the higher education institutions that work with us, 10 of them are funded by Government. We also work with the National Qualifications Development. We develop national qualifications in consultation with the Industry Standard Advisory Committee (ISAC), 60 percent of each

Committee is made up from industry. The other 40 percent come from a number of other areas, including education, disabilities and so forth.

We also work in national qualifications implementation where we promote the uptake of national qualifications which are developed at the Fiji Higher Education Commission. These are from Levels 1 to 4 currently. At Level 4, we offer some very critical national qualifications at the moment on NCTVET, which is on the teaching of TVET. It did not exist prior to this, so it is a very important qualification that we have been working on.

We are also working very much, very closely with the construction industry and with the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF), to develop and deliver national qualifications which are a priority for this country. We also monitor and access the moderation of the national qualifications, so again we work with quality assurance and national qualifications, ensuring that it is being delivered as it should and most importantly, that the assessment and evaluation around the national qualifications are aligned to the curriculum and the programme, and as you would know that it is very critical to both validity and reliability in learning and teaching.

Our Programmes Accreditation: We also do accreditation of non-university programmes. There, we also work very closely with SPC's Educational Quality & Assessment Programme (EQAP). We accredit national qualifications, we record university programmes and these are provider qualifications, and provider programmes that we do not really have control over but we do look at them and we record them so that we know what is going on out there.

This will be looked at in greater detail if I remain on this watch as we go further. We also work with recognition of foreign qualifications and we have very close working relationships internationally with quality assurance agencies internationally in other countries, but in particular with International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which is the International Body of Quality Assurance and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and again I notice you asked questions on this.

We also have very importantly a Fiji Qualifications Council. We formed a Secretariat, we are the Secretariat, both for the Council and as I stated earlier, for the Commission Board. We support the Fiji Qualifications Council which records, accredits programmes from Level 1 to Level 6. Anything higher than level 6, anything higher than a diploma goes to the Commission of which the two gentlemen on my right are members.

I will now hand the presentation over to Lucia who will brief you on the Functions of the Finance Team. Thank you very much.

MS. L. KAFOA.- Thank you, Dr. Nikhat. Honourable Members, to add on, our Finance Team is fairly a small team.

Our three functional areas include:

- **Organisational Development:** This team is responsible for handling the annual audits that are required for the Auditor-General's Office as well as the New Zealand Government funding. We also handle the annual budgets that need to be submitted to the Ministry of Economy.
- **The Institutional Finance Team:** This group handles the allocation of Government grants to 10 funded institutions. We basically administer the funding agreements and we also process the quarterly acquittals tracking on by the institutions.

- **Data Analysis and Research:** Data analytics is a very important element within the education sector and that it provides reliable advice to the Minister and to the Government. So this area is very important and is a growing need within the Higher Education sector. There are currently two major research projects that are being carried out, so this team is basically responsible for the two national research projects.

I will hand over to Shirleen, who will talk on Corporate Services.

MS. S. ALLI.- Good afternoon, Honourable Members. In terms of Corporate Services, we have 6 staffed Teams that support the work of the Fiji Higher Education Commission. They range from;

- 1) Human Resources;
- 2) General Office Administration;
- 3) Registry and Policy (where we are working towards the digitisation and archiving of all our files);
- 4) Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Team (This is in response to one of the questions where the team focuses on building the visibility and credibility of the Commission);
- 5) Information Technology Team (The Team is responsible for not only internally supporting the IT activities of the Commission, but also the projects that have been implemented under the Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand);
- 6) Planning and Reporting Team (The team is responsible for ensuring that the Annual Reports are submitted on time, so that is something that we are fast-tracking in this reporting period).

In terms of our Vision and Mission, working towards our Vision and Mission, we have developed and started the implementation of our Strategic Plan, so this started in 2017 and our Strategic Plan is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals, the National Development Plan and the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts' Strategic Plan, so they are well-aligned to all those three national and international frameworks.

The Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme, which is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade New Zealand, is woven into the FHEC's strategic plan. This is our strategic framework that we work towards where we focus on measuring the outputs that we are working towards that lead to the outcomes that we are trying to deliver.

The following are the 4 outcome areas that we are working towards:

1. Improving access and equity
2. Developing linkages to employment in Fiji
3. Strengthening the higher education system and
4. Building the capacity of our internal support systems and staff.

Lastly, with the Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme, we have six outputs that were developed under the activities designed document that was signed on behalf of the Fiji Government and the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade New Zealand. These six outputs relate to the following six different areas:

1. Strengthening the Fiji qualifications framework
2. Implementing a higher education monitoring framework (Under this, we are developing a monitoring framework that will be monitoring the compliance activities with the higher education institutions)
3. Rolling out new pedagogical approaches to higher education institutions (This is answered in one of the questions where we have developed a local framework, working with teachers in higher education institutions).

4. Focused on implementing our strategic IT plan. So, this strategic IT plan was developed in 2017 and it is something that we are continuing to implement now until the end of the project in 2021.
5. Relates to the our organisation development plan ensuring that we do not only have the processes and systems but the people to support the work the FHEC is trying to achieve.
6. Ensuring that we have Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between us and New Zealand agencies to develop linkages and networks to ensure that if we wanted professional development opportunities or developing the organisation strategically that that support is there available from New Zealand agencies, through those MOUs that we have in place. Thank you, Honourable Members.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Honourable Members, we have presented to you a summary, we feel, of some or many of the queries that you have asked. We have also presented to you a brief, long response to your questions. I am not sure how you would want to do this, Mr. Chairman, would you like us to go through it one by one or how would you prefer us to address these?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much. I request if you can go through that as some of the questions have already been answered in your presentation, if you can be very brief on that. Even with the other questions, if you can be very brief but I will request if you go through all the questions.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- The Chairman has asked me to continue with presenting this, so I will do this now, although I may look left, right or across for support if I need it. Thank you.

So, there is a Brief Overview of the Report: As we said, the Annual Report covers the period from January to July 2016 and provides us with the progress on FHEC's activities and priority areas, financial performance towards supporting these activities. So, the priority areas which I think we have already covered up till December, 2016 were delivering on the Government's strategic priorities for higher education. Now this was from the previous education sector plan. You are aware that the current education sector plan is still in its draft form. At this period of time, this was the previous education sector plan, called the Education Sector Strategic Development Plan (ESSDP), providing a platform for excellence and building our capacity.

The following are major highlights for this reporting period (and I am going to allow you to read that yourselves rather than reading it out, it is going to take too long).

(Honourable Members read through highlights)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You can continue.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- There being no questions, I shall continue.

Q. No. 1: Brief the Committee on the functions of the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

I do believe that we have done that now. I do not think that you want me to go over that again unless there are any burning questions coming out of that.

Q. No. 2; Inform the Committee of the key challenges the FHEC face whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives, and how it is planning to overcome these challenges?

I would like to point out that we have had challenges. They have not been easy but we are working towards those challenges and addressing them so that it is a win-win situation.

The challenges related to the four priority areas are;

- **Improving Access and Equity:** These are our priority areas from our higher education strategy. The challenge there was a lack of data around compliance to access and equity requirements, as per the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Developing linkages to employment in Fiji:** There was a lack of data on the final destination of graduates. We are working on it through the graduate outcome survey that we have recently commissioned.
- **Strengthening the higher education system:** This was a challenge because there was a lack of acceptance of national qualifications by universities. This continues. This is an issue. We are trying to work with the universities on this but to date, I will not lie, we have had challenges there. They are not keen to accept our national qualifications. They want to have their own provider of qualifications, recorded on our qualifications framework.

Also, there is a lack of awareness by the higher education institutions of the FHEC's roles and responsibilities. We have had a number of visits to the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as well as invited them on site to work with us to understand what it is that we are doing, that although we are a regulatory board, at the same time we want to support the higher education institutions in their functions to make higher education in this country better than every other higher education institution in any other country in the world, and we believe very strongly that we can do that with support.

- **We also want to build the capacity of the FHEC to support the delivery of its strategy:** This ties in directly to my point earlier. There was a lack of organisational development and information technology plan. At the moment, our Corporate Services Department is working very strongly towards developing that plan.

The FHEC has, since 2017, developed and implemented a strategic plan for the 2017-2021 period, and you saw an example of that, and we have this plan also on our wall, and you can see the laminated version, so that all our staff have easy access to it and they understand what it is that we are doing and what our core functions are. I think it is very important that everybody within the organisation, including our board members, understand what that plan looks like and what it is that we are working towards.

We have had problems with funding. The limited funding posed some challenges for the FHEC in the achievement of some strategic objectives. We were very grateful to the New Zealand Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MoFAT) supporting us at least 50-50 at this stage, to help us to perform some of our functions. Our funding is limited and it has been shrinking through the Government.

Q. No. 3: How does the FHEC ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?

We do have more males than females, but we do not look at gender when we recruit. Now I feel like I should apologise for me and Lucia fairly in all being women, but we do have board members who are males (gentlemen) and ladies, and we do have a large number of males in the organisation. I think the difficulty for us, however, is that when we put out job advertisements, it seems to be very heavily weighted towards women applying. Now I am not sure whether it is, I know that in other countries that I have worked in, it seems to be the case in the education sector that you have a lot more women than men applying for jobs in the education sector.

It is probably true for Fiji as well, but we have not done a study so that maybe a factor towards it. But, we believe that it is not just about gender, it is about getting the best “bang for your buck”, as we say, and we make every effort to recruit the best.

Q. No. 4: Out of the 37 employees employed by the Commission in January-July 2016 period, what percentage of women were in managerial positions?

We were not there then but those statistics are there for you to look at.

Q. No. 5: Does FHEC align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this?

This is a very important question for us because everything that we do, as Shirleen pointed out to you, is aligned to the SDGs. Now when you look at the SDGs, the next level down from the SDGs, are our National Development Plans for the five-year and the 20-year plans. The 20-year remains quite vague, so most of the work that we do is from the five-year, this is then looked at in the light of our current education sector plan. Now the current education sector plan as I pointed out is in draft form, however we do have a copy of that draft that we have been working with as much as we possibly can.

However, we are very aware that this draft has not been approved by Parliament and therefore we are also still using the previous ESSDP that was developed by MEHA. So I am going to leave that one because I think that we have answered that quite fully in those explanations, however, I would be more than happy to address any of those issues if you should wish to ask me any more complicated questions.

Q. No. 6 (Page 5): Update the Committee on FHEC’s future plans and initiatives?

We have a four-year strategic plan which is aligned to the National Development Plan of MEHA and our strategic plan from 2017-2021 contains the four priority areas that FHEC is focused on and which I have briefed you about earlier. There are also on our laminated piece of big A3 paper. I do not know what number it is supposed to be but it is the large one.

Under these four priority areas, the FHEC has planned the following major initiatives for the 2019-2020 financial year. I think this is quite important, I am going to leave you half a minute to read through this. All good, thank you, Deputy Chairman.

Q. No. 7: Registration of Higher Education Institutions:

a) Provide a list of all institutions that have been registered with the Commission according to the provisions of the Higher Education Act by year until 2019?

We have provided you with the list which includes names of HEIs, dates of First Registration, Registration Nos. You will remember that I said earlier that universities are reviewed every seven years and other higher education institutions are reviewed every five years. We currently have 39 registered institutions with the five Fiji Higher Education Centres.

b) What are the challenges that we face in registering the HEIs?

HEIs applying for Recognition and Registration take time to submit the required documents to process their applications fully. There seems to be some lack of understanding that they need to submit all the documentation on the checklist before we will recognise and register. We have provided some provisional

registrations but when we do, they have a timeline. If they do not meet that timeline, we cannot help them. Generally, it is working well in the past, the sliding scale was better, we acknowledge. However, with the new management team, we have decided we will no longer have a sliding scale and that the criteria is there, the checklist is there, if the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) do not meet what they need to meet, then I am afraid they are going to have to re-apply.

In addition, part of the approval of the process is the assessment of HEIs, their programme documents which need to be aligned to our Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF), some HEIs have been slow in developing their programme documents. We are now helping them to do improved programme documents which are aligned to their assessment systems, so that they are able to do this in a more able way, so we do recognise that not all HEIs have the capacity and we do recognise that sometimes we need to give them that support, so we are now doing that and we often travel or else they come to us for that support, and we have thankfully been able to help them quite a bit.

c) What are the requirements that need to be met by HEIs to obtain full or provisional registration with the Commission as well as to subsequently have their registration renewed?

There is a form, there is a checklist and there is a list of things that they need to meet. They have to meet everything on that checklist otherwise they do not get recognised, if they cannot get recognised, they cannot get registered. The indices fall into five broad criteria which are being categorised as follows (so these are the criteria they have to meet):

- Criteria for governance and sustainability;
- Criteria for welfare of staff and students;
- Criteria for infrastructure, including safe infrastructure;
- Criteria for teaching and learning; and
- Criteria for research for universities and university college applications, because as you know, research is a very important part of what happens at the universities.

How often are HEIs required to renew their registration?

Again this is covered under the Fiji Higher Education Regulation 2009, Part 5, clause 36, which states:

- a. A university or degree awarding institute of technology shall be reviewed every seven years;
- b. Any other higher education institution shall be reviewed every five years; and
- c. A newly established other higher education institution shall be reviewed three years after its registration and every five years thereafter.

d) What is the Commission's plan to expedite the number of registered institutions to be recognised under it? How is it working together with HEIs that are not registered with it to enable them to obtain registration?

This has been hard work, we are very aware that there are institutions out there which want to be registered but do not meet the criteria. Again, as much as possible, we support them through visits, conversations and e-mails as much as possible to enable them to become registered. I think Higher Education Institutions now are much more aware of how important it is for them to be registered.

From 2021, what will happen is that, TSLB will no longer give loans to institutions or to students who study there if they are not registered with us, so that is immediately already putting pressure on them to be

registered, and I think it is a good pressure because again, going back to my earlier point about the importance of quality higher education, I think we have to be very mindful of that.

e) Are there any incentives offered to encourage institutions to register and likewise any penalties imposed on those that fail or delay to register?

The working relationship which we have with the FNPF and the TSLB, has seen a tightening of processes whereby only registered HEIs are eligible to access funding for private or sponsored scholarships or loan students. For HEIs that fail to meet recognition status or transition to become fully registered, the FHEC has the authority to get the institution closed. The FHEC also works with the Department of Immigration so that visas for foreign teachers, trainers and students are not granted if the HEI is not registered.

If you revoke an institution, you would have noticed it in the newspapers, in the media, if you recognise register institutions, you would also have seen that in the newspapers. So, the information is publicly available.

Q. No. 8: Is there a database maintained to capture all Higher Education (HE) information as required under the Act?

Yes, we capture our information on our database. The information ranges from institution details to programme and course details. The FHEC is currently progressing the work on its database through funding from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Q. No. 9: Please, explain on the establishment of the National Standards for different qualifications. Has it been completed yet? If not, what is the progress?

This was a bit of a curly question. There has been a lot of hard work and has not been easy. So, the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) has been established since 2012, reviewed and updated in 2018. This framework describes 10 level descriptors (which describe levels of learning complexity) and includes 10 qualification-type descriptors. The qualification-type descriptors outline the purpose of each qualification type and the entry requirements, its credit value and its relationship to other qualifications.

National standards are developed as building blocks for national qualifications which are accredited and registered on the FQF. Each qualification is developed by the Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs) (which I talked about earlier). Remember, they are 60 percent made up of industry. First, national qualifications (at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4) were developed in response to the needs of trade-related skills in Fiji.

These were, and I think you are aware of this through our National Development Plan, construction, automobile, tourism, electrical, electronics, agriculture. Fifty six national qualifications were completed and trialed at selected institutions. These are the Vivekananda Technical Centre (VTV), Technical Colleges of Fiji (TCF) and there are 15 of those, Monfort Boys Town (MBT) as of 2016, and they are, of course, here in Suva as well as in Savusavu.

This process is an on-going activity and to date, 122 national qualifications have been completed at levels 1 and 2, the areas of most need as you are aware, and most are currently being delivered at approved delivery centers - MBT, Technical College of Fiji and Fiji Latter-Day Saints (LDS) Church College.

The Standards and Guidelines for Fiji Higher Education Institutions document outline the 20 standard criteria that must be met for a qualification to be recognised against the FQF. Every single Higher Education Institution in Fiji has a copy of that document. The document is also publicly and widely available and we had

a launch for the public earlier this year, I think it was in April. I hope some of you were there, it was a very good launch.

Q. No. 10: USP has been in the news lately highlighting mismanagement, what is the Commission's view on this especially in regard to the big amount of funds allocated to this institution?

We agree that a huge amount of funds are allocated to this institution, however, we are unable to comment on this issue of mismanagement until an official report is received by the FHEC. We work with official complaints, whether it comes from students, parents, public or anybody until it comes to us officially, there is nothing we can do about it.

Q. No. 11: What kind of information FHEC has to offer in regard to students that have graduated and are in employment?

We are carrying out a graduate outcome survey. Currently, we have a very good team in the country and it is made up of national and international consultants, so it is quite good. This will hopefully and team members are providing us with very much-needed baseline information to determine the growth and performance of our graduates in the workplace.

Once our results are finalized and our trends are identified, we will be better informed on how best to advice various stakeholders, including students who have graduated. We also hope that the results of the study will tie in with the National Priorities through the National Development Plan. So, we can see those links going on.

Q. No. 11(b): How has FHEC maintained and improved its relationship with the Higher Education Institutions and Industry?

Subsequent to these observations from 2016, the FHEC has addressed this issue. We value all our stakeholders and we make concerted efforts to engage with the higher education institutions and industry regularly. The following are some of the activities conducted as part of this valuable engagement:

- Institutional visits and meetings with senior management: With a brief on the functions of the FHEC, particularly in funding because this is often a sensitive issue, investment plans, teaching and learning, it ties in with our quality assurance work, staffing capabilities - our HR and recruitment and a requirement under the Fiji Qualifications Framework.
- Conducting professional development opportunities for teaching and administration staff in the areas of programme accreditation, recognition of foreign qualifications, funding and quality assurance processes: We have a budget for this and we ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to tap into professional development opportunities in the area of their need. So, if anything comes up, we match that with the capacity, the capability and the current role of the staff members at FHEC to ensure that we are getting again the best value for money.
- We engage with the Industry Sector Advisory Committee (ISAC) for different sector industry in the trade skill areas: Again, the national priority areas, construction, automobile, electrical and electronics, mechanical, tourism and agriculture.

Q. No. 12: What recommendations has FHEC made to the Minister on issues consistent with its functions, including special projects and how can this be taken into consideration?

Can I just point out that the Tokyo Convention has yet to be ratified by Parliament. It has gone through Cabinet. The Tokyo Convention is an International Convention. It is for higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

There are International Conventions as well, there is the European Union Convention that all are part of the same Convention. And if we ratify the Tokyo Convention, I think it is very critical that we do that because it will enable No. 1, Labour Mobility; and No. 2, Recognition of our Qualifications and our Standards internationally, first of all, in the Pacific and in Asia, but very importantly, because the Tokyo Convention is linked to all the other International Conventions, it will enable us to then be seen as a very strong player of the international scene.

Currently, five countries in the Pacific have signed up although one of them is the Holy Sea, so I am not sure if that is counted as the Pacific and Turkey. So two of them have also ratified the Pacific one, which is the Tokyo Convention, Australia and New Zealand are the other two.

So I think that it is very important if we are going to look at the viability of our higher education programmes that Fiji really needs to ratify this Convention, and I have spoken to the Minister about this at length. I have also spoken to the Permanent Secretary. I am not sure, to tell you the truth, where it is at the moment. It is stuck somewhere between Cabinet and Parliament, so over to you.

Q. No. 13: The Committee notes that the FHEC is a member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) which are the international bodies for our quality assurance programmes, our quality standards programme, they also, of course, part of the work that has been done under the Tokyo Convention. What requirements of these quality assurance agencies does the Commission need to meet in order to deliver as a regulating body?

We have already met these requirements and we are members of both of these. We are a member of the INQAAHE and we are a member of APQN - very, very important because they are the international quality assurance bodies for higher education and it is very important for our Higher Education Commission to be part of this.

The Evaluation Criteria that we needed to meet is set there. There is Criteria 1 to Criteria 11 and they have all been met, so I am not going to read through it, I will leave that to you to read in your own time.

Q. No. 14: Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS).

a) What has been the outcome of the Commission's collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts in tracking the rate at which learners progress from secondary school to higher education?

Some of the outcomes since the project was initiated in 2016 have been:

- Enhanced collaboration with MEHA on improvements to FEMIS to better cater for non-university HEIs which would use the system as their Student Management System (SMS). That is improvement of the system (2017);
- Development of Standardised Reporting Fields under the FEMIS Higher Education Institution Data Collaboration Agreement;

- Trial uploading of student data with FNU and USP on to FEMIS (2018), this is ongoing. We are continuing to engage and consult with them;
- The signing of the FEMIS HEI data Collaboration Agreement between MEHA, FHEC and the USP and FNU, essentially agreeing to the process of data exchanges and trialling of the system which was signed in May 2018;
- Piloting of FEMIS at the ServicePro International Tourism and Hospitality Institute and increased advocacy with Higher Education Institutions on the use of FEMIS as an SMS to better manage student data and records from February 2018;
- Pilot and onboarding of FEMIS with the Vivekananda Technical Centre in July 2019; and
- Improved collaboration and an enhanced relationship with the Higher Education Institutions on the integration of Higher Education data on to FEMIS.

Since 2016, quite a lot has been done. It is not complete by any means, but it is ongoing and I think we need to work on that further.

b) What has been the progress on the creation of a central repository for the Higher Education sector to capture selected HE data in FEMIS? What type of HE data is captured therein?

Progress on the creation of this central data repository for the higher education sector via FEMIS has been slow, we acknowledge that. But we have consulted and collaborated heavily with MEHA. Because, they have got that institutional memory from ECE to secondary, so going into HE has been a new area, it seems to be working well from ECE to secondary but it is something that we need to work on a lot more with the Higher Education.

We are overcoming challenges. A major challenge is the initial resistance by universities to obtain, exchange and integrate onto FEMIS. There seems to be a reluctance to share data. The universities are very sensitive about their data so it has required a lot of work on our part:

- We have worked closely with the Higher Education Institutions to build capacity on the use of FEMIS as supported by the MEHA FEMIS team, so we are working together with them.
- Continuously engaging with the Higher Education Institutions to ensure that the momentum of progress does not come to a halt, so it is ongoing and tedious work, I can assure you.

The integration of Higher Education data on to FEMIS will add on to existing data on students from ECE through to high schools and the Technical Colleges of Fiji (TCF), and they include the following:

- Student Information;
- Institutional Information;
- Next phases of data collection, very importantly, the first one is:
 - Disability information, tying in to our focus on excessive equity that we talked about earlier;
 - Workforce data - tying in to our work on linkages which employment which we talked about earlier.

- Percent of programme online, very much related to the teaching and learning and assessment components about quality insurance work.
- Further refinements to the current data sets to ensure information is accurately collated for various reporting levels, i.e. higher education sector, wider education sector, national, regional and international level reporting.

We were also aware that we do need to report internationally to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to their statistics office and so we are trying to manage that, we are behind with those reportings.

c) How is this data assisting the Commission in improving the quality of the education sector in Fiji?

This will be determined once FEMIS is fully-integrated by Higher Education Institutions.

Anybody wants to take over? Keep going?

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, Madam, because the questions will follow after you have completed reading.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Is the way I am presenting this all right with you, Honourable Members?

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Yes.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Too fast, too slow?

HON. MEMBER.- Yes, you are doing fine.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Getting a bit tired though.

(Laughter)

HON. MEMBER.- Have some water.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- All right, let us continue.

Q. No. 15. Provide details on the criteria the Fiji Higher Education Commission uses to allocate government funds to HEIs.

This is a very important question because the HEIs also need to be aware of how the funding is allocated to them, and it has not been an easy task to explain to HEIs how funding has been allocated because in the past, it has not been very clear how the funding model has worked.

Between 2016-2017, in allocating Government funds to HEIs, the Fiji Higher Education Commission used a model, commonly referred to as the “funding model”, which has been approved by Cabinet. The model is formula based and uses two funding components to determine HEI funding:

- enrolments funding component; and
- leverage funding component.

The enrolments funding components uses variables such as programme costs and tuition fee revenue to the level of government subsidy required. A level playing field factor, which has a percentage weighting that is based on the type of institution, is then applied. For instance, state-owned institutions would be subsidised at a higher rate than private HEIs due to the Government's obligation in supporting the sustainability of the higher education institutions.

The leverage funding component allocates funding to all HEIs based on three factors;

1. the uniqueness of the higher education institution;
2. the quality of HEIs in terms of facilities, staff and Quality Assurance Systems; and the
3. HEIs access (geographically and in terms of students from low socio-economic groups and impaired members of society with disabilities).

The FHEC is currently working towards Cabinet approval for a revised funding model for implementation in 2020-2021. The revised funding model proposes two funding models to cater for the diversity of HEIs in the system. One funding model will be for the universities and one funding model will be for the non-universities. So, there are 3 universities: the University of the South Pacific, Fiji National University and the University of Fiji, and then we have 7 other ones.

This is because the universities are larger, more sophisticated, research-active institutions, whereas the non-universities are smaller, have a relatively narrow focus and often lack sophisticated corporate systems and corporate capability. Therefore, each model is designed to take account of the differences in the scale and focus of the two groups of HEIs.

The university and the non-university funding model will each consist of five funding components. The following four components are common in each model. Now, we are talking about going towards the new model, what the new model is going to look like. So, the first component is;

1. Teaching and learning: This component will recognise the costs of delivering education and the number of students;
2. Equity: This component is to incentivise enrolment in and completion of qualifications by people from almost disadvantaged groups, particularly students with disabilities and students from low-income families;
3. Performance: This component is to incentivise HEIs to support their students towards completion of their studies so that we have survivors that we do not have dropouts and pushouts in the systems, and that again we are getting value for money because the minute you lose a student, all the money that you have invested in that student, be it parents or be it government is lost, so very critical.
4. National Priority: This component is to recognise the Government's role in driving national priorities as outlined in our National Development Plan.

The fifth funding component will distinguish the two funding models. The fifth component in the University funding model is a research component to incentivise universities to conduct research which are aligned to Fiji's national needs - a very important component.

The fifth component in the non-university model will be an institutional base grant component, reflecting the fact that these HEIs are small and therefore, unable to achieve economies of scale.

Q. No. 16: Elaborate on the National Policy on Open Educational Resources (OER) and how schools have benefitted from it.

The term “Open Educational Resources (OER)” describes publicly accessible materials and resources for any user to use, re-mix, improve and redistribute under some licences. The development and promotion of open educational resources are often motivated by a desire to provide an alternate or enhanced educational shifts.

The OER policy was launched by the Minister for Education in March 2016. This mooted a series of OER activities including workshops and engaging with key stakeholders, including the universities to adopt and adapt the OER. Ownership of the OER now lies with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, it does not lie with us.

Q. No. 17: Briefly explain the roles of the following FHEC Committees:

- Recognition Committee;
- Registration Committee; and
- Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs).

Recognition Committee: As per the Higher Education Regulations 2009, Part 3, clause 11 says that the Recognition Committee has been established to assess applications from higher education institutions for recognition status. The Committee makes recommendations accordingly to the Commission.

Registration Committee: As per the Higher Education Act 2008, section 8 says that the Registration Committee has been established to assess applications from higher education institutions for recognition status. The Committee makes recommendations accordingly to the Commission.

The Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACS) are responsible for:

- the research and development of proposed National Qualifications;
- undertaking consultation with relevant industry, regulator, licensing body or community to confirm the need for the qualification and ensure that the proposed qualification meets this need;
- providing advice and guidance (because many of them are in that industry);
- endorsing the final draft of the proposed National Qualifications;
- ensuring that the accreditation submission meets the requirements of the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) and the Quality Standards for Accreditation of FQF Qualifications 1 to 10 (2-1a Guidelines).

Q. No. 18: The Fiji Higher Education Improvement Programme (FHEIP) 2016 to 2021.

Ms. Shirleen presented a draft outline of this when we did our presentation.

a) What progress have we made on the above programme and in making improvements to the five focus areas outlined on Page 22 of the Annual Report?

The implementation of the FHEIP started in January, 2017 with the recruitment of a new Director and Programme Manager. Our new Director was Ms. Linda Amua. The programme Manager was Troy Earl. Ms. Linda was from New Zealand, Mr. Troy was from Australia.

The five focus areas referred to in the 2016 Annual Report refer to the short-term outcomes for the FHEIP. With regard to the five focus areas, the FHEC works towards six outputs under these five focus areas and I am

not going to go through these examples because you have seen them already on the file there. If you have any specific questions on that, we would be happy to address them.

The FHEC, as part of Output 6 in developing stronger linkages with international agencies, I think I have stressed this quite a bit in our presentation this afternoon, the importance of having those international agencies aligned with us and with the work that we do. I think it is really important for our students to understand that they have opportunities and the ability to look broadly at what those opportunities are.

Also, labour mobility is not something that we can curtail. Labour mobility is here to stay, so I think it is really important for us to draw those linkages and have those international connections that I talked earlier about, particularly ratifying those conventions, and so forth.

The FHEC has now signed MOUs with five organisations in New Zealand, as part of the MoFAT Agreement with the FHEIP. These are:

- Wintech;
- Skills International;
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA);
- Ako Aotearoa and Te Wananga o Awanuiarangi; and
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) of Australia.

We have a strong relationship with them. We communicate, we also work at capacity building, FHEC but also providing them with greater information on the Pacific. I have recently attended a Pacific Labour Mobility meeting in Auckland where I was able to talk further about this.

b) Provide a breakdown of the grants administered to the Commission under this Programme for each year from 2016 to 2019 and how they were utilised.

The grants are allocated according to the six output areas.

This is in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement between FHEC and the New Zealand MoFAT. Here, you have a project summary of the three tranches received of late and the totals as well as the utilisation.

Q. No. 20: Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) Team's three-day visit to Fiji.

a) What was the outcome of the CTEF team's three-day visit to study Fiji's Higher Education model and its funding?

The result of the three-day visit was a mutual agreement between the Research Team from CTEF and the Collaborator, FHEC and other stakeholders to work together and produce a policy paper that was tabled at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers meeting in Fiji in February, 2018.

b) The Committee notes from the Annual Report that a research team comprising of representatives from the CTEF and stakeholders from a few Pacific Island nations will be undertaking a study on the effectiveness of Higher Education financing models. Have we undertaken this study? If so, what were the recommendations for reform which have been proposed to the governments in the Pacific?

We maintain no documentation on this to be able to effectively respond to this question. We have no idea of what happened and we cannot find any history of it.

Q. No. 21: As outlined in the National Development Plan, was the Commission able to review the apprenticeship programmes in tertiary and vocational institutions in the 2018-2019 Financial Year?

A review was undertaken as part of a study by the Queensland University of Technology who has the consultancy for this. The eighth recommendations are currently being acted upon. These include the recommendations on the apprenticeship scheme and the establishment of a skills council for Fiji. I thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam, for your presentation, and I would also like to thank the CEO of the Commission and the team for the enlightenment in the presentation with a lot of information about the Fiji Higher Education Commission and all that happened during the year.

Now, I will invite questions from Honourable Members, Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Moti, and Dr. Shameem for your team. Although you mentioned that you are a new team looking after the Fiji Higher Education Commission, from your presentation, I believe it is very active.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Thank you.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- That is a good thing. My question is in regards to one of the challenges in your four priority areas, and that is developing linkages to employment in Fiji.

Like I have experienced firsthand, not all people coming out of universities are being employed. I worked in an industry whereby I notice that people coming out with Bachelors are working in the hotel industry. My question is with regards to the issue of the lack of data on final destination of graduates, are there enough employment opportunities in Fiji to cater for the increasing number of graduates coming up with the Higher Education Institution?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Yes, Mr. Chair, your response.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- I am going to ask Lucia to respond, since she is being the one who is involved with the graduate outcome survey so she will be able to brief you about how that is working and what we hope to gain from that survey to further support our graduates.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

MS. L. KAFOA.- Thank you, Honourable Member, for the question. As mentioned earlier, the Higher Education Commission is currently engaged in research project where we are engaging advice to be provided to Government on the graduate outcome survey.

This research project covers all the institutions as well as other high schools, where we will be gaining data that will be useful. We are also liaising with other stakeholders, for example, the FNPf Tertiary Loan Scheme as well as the FRCS, the tax department, in trying to get the information as well as with the other employment stakeholders, to gather information on what jobs are needed by the economy to move us forward.

Also, from the institutions, the supply side on what qualifications need to be provided by the institutions to support what is needed by the employment sector, so the education sector is working closely with the

employment sector through this research project and gathering the data to be able to match the demands in supply within the two sectors.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam. Yes, Honourable Member.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- You mentioned that research is ongoing, when can we expect the findings?

MR. L. KAFOA.- Thank you. The research has just begun, the findings, the inception report has just been received and we are estimating to have a completed final report by the middle of next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Yes, Honourable George Vegnathan? Honourable Simone Rasova.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman, and I thank Mr. Julian Moti and Dr. Nikhat Shameem, thank you very much for your presentation.

Just on Page 2, second question: Inform the Committee of the key challenges and on strengthening the higher education system, acceptance of national qualifications by universities.

There you seem to have addressed that the universities and the institutions are not linking their information. The universities seem not to be responding to your request: both Fiji Government gives about \$70 million a year to all those institutions to work together. How are we going to rectify the universities to work together in collecting their data as mentioned here, the acceptance of national qualifications by universities?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You mean to say about data-sharing?

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Yes, the acceptance of national qualifications by universities.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Can anyone respond to that?

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Thank you, Honourable Member, for asking me that question. It is a very important question and a question that has been bothering me. The thing about universities is that they have their own qualifications and they have their own programmes, so they have the leeway to do what they feel is the best possible programme or qualification that they need to deliver at the university level, and those are called provider qualifications. We register these provider qualifications on our Fiji Qualifications Framework, but that is where it ends. Now, how do I put this - they do not want to take on the national qualifications because, No. 1, the national qualifications are at quite a low level, because from diploma, it is level six and above.

Generally, the qualifications and programmes they send to us are higher level, whereas our Fiji Qualifications Council deals with the qualifications and programmes which are lower, from Levels 1 to Level 6, so all our national qualifications so far are up to Level 4 actually, which means that the universities do not necessarily have to take them up, because they are going for the higher level qualifications which go to the Commission for approval and for putting on the framework.

Under our regulations, our hands are tied. Having said that, we do recognise the Technical Colleges of Fiji (TCF) are going to be amalgamated into the Fiji National University. The FNU has categorically told us that they will not accept the national qualifications that the TCFs are bringing with them and that they will be working to convert the national qualifications into provider qualifications, which sit rather uncomfortably with us as you would imagine, because I think that national qualifications have a way to go. But again, there is not a lot we can do with that, the prerogative is with the universities. Sorry, I cannot give you a better answer.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- You are not the regulator?

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- We are the regulator but we are not the regulator in terms of the provider qualifications as to what they offer. So we look at their programmes and we can see that everything is in place in terms of the programme, but we cannot force anyone to take on a national qualification.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- But, Madam, once you will have that data which you are currently working on, will that make a difference as what is required?

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- No, because that stays in place, if they want a provider qualifications, they will have provider qualifications, so while the data is related to the graduate outcome survey which will help us to ensure that our graduates are moving into areas where there is a need, in terms of the qualifications that the universities offer, there is not a lot we can do. If they decide not to take up the national qualifications, we cannot force anyone to take on the national qualifications.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam. Any other questions, Honourable Members? Yes, Doctor?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Earlier this year, we visited the University Campus in Labasa. There are issues with regards to space per student. I think there was one benchmark and they had mentioned in regards to student per space, and the benchmark the Director in Labasa said that all of the universities are below par then with regards to the students per allocation of learning space, which is to be conducive at that. What has the Fiji Higher Education Commission taken with regards to the increase in the number of students? Now we are just seeing with the infrastructure being extended, have you ever seen this at the university where you have these number of students and therefore you have to increase your capacity: building, space, infrastructure?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Maybe during the registration time on the criteria.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- You have received your answer, that is exactly it. We can only do it when they are up for review. So, we cannot go butting our nose in their business, they will throw us out, so when they are up for review because remember, universities are reviewed every 7 years, that is quite a long period of time.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- You should reduce it.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Yes. I wish. We are trying to, yes, well, never mind, that is another conversation.

We do want to reduce it, you are absolutely right. We also want to standardise it, so that all higher education institutions have the same review period, which is 5 years. At the moment, it is very uncomfortable because we have a 5-year review period and we have a 7-year review period for universities.

With universities, we have limited ability to make big changes, it is very difficult. We have to negotiate, it is not easy. Even to bring the VC's together with the Fiji High Education Commission and the Ministry into one room is not always easy.

So, these are conversations that we need to have, we do acknowledge what you are saying but again our powers are limited to its capacity.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam. Maybe, as a Committee, we will think about that and we will do our best while reporting back to Parliament because the Fiji Higher Education Commission is a very important institution as far as education is concerned. For your information, we went through page by page in regards to the report and we have heard another presentation before in the past term when I was still chairing the Committee

and so many presentation from the Fiji Higher Education Commission and I believe there is so much more that needs to be done, especially the institutions that are all linked up with the FHEC, but indeed we are very happy with your presentation. Honourable Members, any other questions?

HON. S.K. RASOVA.- I just like to congratulate the members of the Fiji Higher Education Commission because of the period mentioned. You mentioned that you just came in about 8 months ago and then two ladies have been co-opted in January. Congratulations for a very good report. On Question No. 15, provide details on the criteria FHEC uses to allocate funds.

We are here to scrutinise government funding. The two types of funding were the enrolment funding component and the leverage funding component. Now, in your term, you have done a whole new 5. Briefly just brief us as to how it is going to be good. I know that it is going to be good funding to use up the government funding. Can you, please, elaborate very briefly, please? Thank you.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I am going to hand this over to Ms. Lucia because she will be able to explain the model a lot more than I can. But I think your observations are absolutely correct. I think that in the interest of transparency, it is really important for the Higher Education institutions, not just the ones who are getting the money but also the other ones to understand how it works.

I think if you have any leverage at all, it would be to perhaps expand the number of Higher Education institutions that get supported by government, because I think we all agree that higher education in this country has to be well supported if we are looking at being accountable internationally, and we are. We have to be able to hold our heads up.

So, I think it is really important that that funding that goes to HEIs is transparent and that the HEIs are accountable for it. So, I am going to hand this over to Ms. Lucia because she has been working on that funding model and she would be able to explain further. Thank you.

MS. L. KAFOA.- Thank you, Dr. Nikhat. Yes, Honourable Member, we agree with you. Just to highlight that, in the current Budget, \$93 million is allocated to the institutions for the current financial year. The reason why we have instigated or started to review the funding model is because we have seen that the funding model is a very important tool for Government. The amount of money that is used is very significant and accountability of this funding is very important.

The benefits of the new model compared to the old model, I will just highlight a few of them: The most important one is that it protects Government's expenditure and prevents fiscal risk on how the Government will be spending its spending as specified - \$93 million is a very significant amount. So the new funding model is in line with the Annual Grant Agreements which we assign to each institution - this is new, it was not done initially, which requires each institution to account for each cent used. So they are required to submit quarterly acquittals which has to be given to us which we administer and also advise the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Education.

The other advantage is that, the new model drives Government's expectations from the Higher Education sector, it strengthens Government's need where we require the institutions to give us data information on their enrolments, graduates so this information is useful for the sector as well.

The national priority component, as we had highlighted, is also going to help the Government to influence its system according to what the priorities are as per the National Development Plans, this is also important. Quality advice is given to Government on how the public funding is or how the funds are spent within the institutions, so these are some of the many advantages that the new funding model is bringing into place.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam. Are there any other questions, Honourable Members?

I just would like to know, Mr. Chair and the members present, that there are other institutions who do their own trainings and courses, for example, the Fiji Police Force. This was actually raised to me which the officers at different times have trainings within their organisations. Is there any way to deal with the Commission or how they are accredited in their courses? All along, it is happening in other organisations also. Time and again, the officers have about two weeks or a month of courses so how is that linked?

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that very important question. The Fiji Higher Education Commission works with award conferring qualifications. So we do not do the short courses, we do not do the ones that do not give an award. So if you do not get a certificate, you do not get a diploma, you do not get a degree, we do not work with you. Some of the institutions, what they do, a qualification is made up of the several unit standards, so some providers what they will do is they will take out the unit standards and they will just work on the standards.

Eventually, the standards will reach the qualification. In that case, we support because those standards are aligned to our national qualifications, but when it comes to the Police Force, the Police Force has recently asked for recognition status. So we are working with them on recognition status, are they working towards the criteria that they have to meet, but again is the institution, the organisation that would be recognised and registered.

In terms of the qualifications and the awards they offer, at the moment, the Fiji Higher Education does not do micro-credentials, we do not do short courses but I tell you who does, SPC (EQAP), they do the micro-credentials and if you got the micro-credentials, they can place that on the Pacific Qualifications Framework. We do not, at the moment, have the ability to work with the small, small, programmes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Yes, Honourable Simione Rasova.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Honourable Members of the Committee, I just like to thank you very much. The Tokyo Convention, we have been in Tokyo and I have watched Tokyo every day for the last one month.

(Laughter)

We will get to that. Thank you very much.

DR. N. SHAMEEM.- If there is one thing that I would like you to take away from this meeting, Honourable Members, I would like to see that Tokyo Convention ratified. It will really help our graduates and our young workers, honestly speaking. Thank you for doing that.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Members.

We are towards the end of the presentation. The Chair of the Commission would like to say a few things before we actually close for the day.

MR. J. MOTI.- Thank you, Chair and Honourable Members. I recognise some familiar faces. This is an opportune moment for us, certainly for me and my fellow Commissioner, our first appearance before your august institution with the Committee.

Thank you for treating us with great decorum and respect. It is an honour to respond as we have with the amount of detail that we have mastered. I hope it helps you in your deliberations on the Report that is now dated

but I can still sense from your interactions with us that you are quite knowledgeable about what has been going on, and we hope you will give us the teeth that we need to do so by regulations to bolster the FHEC's capacity to be more effective and to be more cost-effective to Government.

I am also grateful to my "co-submittees" (the new word I have learnt today); to the Committee for supplicating with our answers; and we are happy to furnish you with further information that you might require to supplement what we have said so far. Thank you very much for this one.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Chair of the Commission and the team, for the enlightening presentation and also providing all the answers to the questions which were sent.

Also for your information, our secretariat team will be in touch with you should we need any other information. Also, just to add, we have a lot of things in mind after your presentation, what needs to come to us so that we can report back to the Parliament, so we would be discussing that at a later stage.

Once again, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I would like to thank you very much for your time. Thank you very much. Vinaka.

The Committee adjourned at 3.17 p.m.